Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, December 14, 1902, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Beinn Bhreagh, Victoria County, Cape Breton, N. S. 1902 Dec, 14, Sunday. My dear Alec:

Your telegram and note were a great relief. I am sure that we are substantially in accord and with possibly one exception all our differences are unimportant details. The only thing I really care about is to avoid all personal business relations with any one but the Manager. Let Davidson charge us for garden produce at market prices as you say, but let the Manager present the bill to us as head of the concern. A case in point is that of great department stores like that of Woodward and Lothrop in Washington. There they have perfectly distinct departments, each with its own Head staff and employees who have nothing to do with the other departments. There is the dressmaking department, the grocery department, the book and stationery department. I go from one department to the other and am served by different employees in each, but I get but one bill, the bill of Woodward and Lothrop, and I pay Woodward and Lothrop, and leave them to pay their employees. I buy of No. 13 L. of the dressmaking Dept., No. 4 N. of the grocery, and pay Woodward and Lothrop. So, also Woodward and Lothrop have buyers for their different departments, a buyer for the dressmaking department, another for the grocery. I don't know how they manage, but I can't conceive that the buyers are given carte blanche to buy as they like without consultation with the head of the firm, so I don't think Davidson should buy his own supplies without authority from the Manager. I have seen Woodward 2 and Lothrop's dressmaker go around buying things at their other counters, and she is always charged for them by cheque sent to the bookkeeper, I think Davidson ought to get all his orders through the Manager. Davidson tells me that he has kept tally of every load of manure he has had from the farm. This I am sure is good business, and I am sure the farmer ought to keep tally of all the loads he gives Davidson. We spend a great deal of

money, but never see any. Now why cannot we have little checks printed and used as currency on the farm and why is not this the simplest form of bookkeeping. See how it would work. Davidson wants manure from the farm and asks the Manager if he can have some, Manager replies, "You may have ten loads, here are ten checks one for every load." Davidson takes them home and every time he sends for a load he pays a check to the farmer. At the end of the month the farmer sends in his ten checks to the Manager, and the Manager knows without any fuss that Davidson has had his loads and so certifies that the farm has sold the garden ten loads. At present Davidson has no security but his own word that he has received the manure, and the farmer might dispute it and there be endless trouble.

Let Davidson say Jan. 1, Mr. McInnis, Manager.

Dear Sir:

I want 500 loads of manure between now and April 1st., 600 feet of fence pole for fence ordered by Mrs. Bell, 20 rods of wire fencing ordered by her, 60 bushels potato heads, 2 peck pea seed, 2 oz tulip seed, one rake and one garden roller.

Yours truly, J. G. Davidson.

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Then 1st McInnis, Manager reply, J. G. Davidson, Dear Sir:

Sorry I can't give you more than 350 loads as the farm cannot spare more. Enclosed I send therefore 350 checks divided as follows: 100 payable before Feb. 1st, 100 before March 1st, and 160 before April 1st. Herewith I authorize you to cut 600 ft. of fence pole, 100 ft. more or less to be cut from place marked A — 6 on plan, 300 from flat meadow above Lodge, 200 from thicket beyond South Shore Road. I also authorize you to order from the Page Wire Fencing Co., 20 rods of wire fencing, but cannot allow more than 20

bushels of potato heads for which I enclose 20 checks payable by April. The 2 peck pea seed and 2 oz tulip seed, one rake and one garden roller are allowed.

Yours truly, McInnis, Manager. Now, why won't the exchange of the load and potato checks prevent any possibility of friction between gardener and farmer, and for the rest Mr. McInnis' letter is Davidson's authority to go ahead and purchase outside, and the bill will be sent Davidson and afterwards sent by him to the Manager. Then the Manager will send in his own bill to you, and will say — ....

(Rest of letter statement, etc.)